

American Indian Counseling Center Celebrates Mental Health Month



On Wednesday, May 18, 2016, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's American Indian Counseling Center in Cerritos held its Mental Health Month Celebration. This year's theme was "Hope and Wellness Come from Within." The event was held at Liberty Park, in Cerritos. There were approximately 80 people in attendance.

The Master of Ceremonies was Janelle Arambula, MSW. Dr. Dan Dickerson, sang a song in his Native language as a blessing at the start of the program. It was followed by a drumming performance from Changing Spirits. Opening comments were then made by Melanie J. Cain, PhD., and one of our WOW volunteers, Iva Maes. Later, client successes were highlighted, such as improvement in mental wellness, graduation from FSP and completion of Independent Skills Group. Clients who transitioned out of AICC and into the community shared success stories and one is entering graduate school this Fall.

Participants had an opportunity to enjoy artistic crafts, such as traditional basket weaving, taught by Stephanie Mushrush, MSW, and creation of "dream feathers" for a large dream catcher to be displayed in AICC's office, led by Azucena Salazar. There were numerous physical fitness activities which participants enjoyed; such as yoga, as taught by Arlene Espinosa, LMFT, and Danielle Estrada, MSW; tennis skills taught by Kim Tea; a bean bag toss led by Belinda Smith, LCSW; Bingo led by AICC volunteer Iva

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Maes; and Volleyball Fun led by Christina Gracia, MSW. There was also 'Fitness Ice Breakers' led by staff from United American Indian Involvement, Inc., a county-contracted agency; and a Walk-a-Thon where some clients walked at least one mile, led by Doris Rodriguez and Angela Trenado, LCSW.



Attendees had a chance to visit resource tables and outreach booths from National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI), Whittier branch, Red Circle Project, Changing Spirits, staff from two of United American Indian Involvement's (UAI) programs of Health Project and Youth Program, Pacificare, Telecare Discoveries, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) SPA 7 Administration, Cal State Dominguez Hills, Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), and the AICC Client Advisory Board (CAB) .



Aztec Dancers and Native American dancers, dancing to a traditional drum group led by Changing Spirits volunteers, shared their culture and traditional dances with everyone.



One of the final activities was the drummers and the dancers involved the audience in a rousing Round Dance in a celebratory conclusion of cultural sharing and hope.

